

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 TRSE-00 SSM-03 ACDA-12  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAD-00  
INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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O R 211045Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7707

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2259

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, LE

SUBJ: CRISIS IN LEBANON: DISCUSSION WITH SULEIMAN FRANGIEH

1. CALLED ON FORMER PRESIDENT SULEIMAN FRANGIEH 1130 HOURS  
APRIL 20. MEETING HAD BEEN SET UP PRIOR TO CABINET CRISIS  
BUT WE DECIDED TO GO AHEAD WITH IT ANYWAY.
  2. IN BRIEF, FRANGIEH SAID HE WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT  
PRESENT SITUATION. ATTITUDES ON BOTH CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM  
SIDES WERE HEATED AND HE DID NOT SEE ELEMENTS OF SOLUTIONS.  
NOT A SINGLE MUSLIM HAS STOOD UP AND SAID HE WAS OPPOSED TO  
ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE OR TO PALESTINIAN INTERFERENCE  
IN LEBANESE POLITICS. FOR THEM TO DO SO WAS SINE QUA NON  
OF SOLUTION.
  3. WITH REGARD TO SOUTH, HE DID NOT THINK RESOLUTION 425 WAS  
IN INTERESTS OF LEBANON. UN WAS TALKING ABOUT HELPING LEBANON  
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- EXTEND ITS AUTHORITY TO SOUTH BUT WAS DOING NOTHING TO  
FACILITATE IT. HE HAD HEARD FROM EYE WITNESS THAT FRENCH WERE  
NOT PREVENTING PALESTINIANS, ARMED AND OTHERWISE, FROM  
MOVING IN AND OUT OF TYRE. FRENCH WERE IN BARRACKS THERE.  
WHAT WERE THEY DOING?
4. I SAID I HAD YET TO FIND A SINGLE MUSLIM, SUNNI OR OTHER-

WISE, WHO DID NOT FEEL PALESTINIAN PRESENCE WAS PROBLEM THAT HAD TO BE RESOLVED. SINCE MILITARY SOLUTION SEEMED TO BE OUT OF QUESTION, POLITICAL SOLUTION HAD TO BE ARRIVED AT. PERHPAS MODIFIED SHTAURA AGREEMENT WOULD HELP. IN ANY EVENT, MUSLIMS WERE APPREHENSIVE ABOUT MARONITE ATTITUDES AND NEEDED SOME REASSURANCE.

5. WITH REGARD TO SOUTH I SAID ISRAELIS HAD FAILED TO TAKE TYRE, NABATIYAH AND BEAUFORT BECAUSE THEY DID NOT WANT CASUALTIES AND THOSE THREE POINTS REMAINED VERY SENSITIVE. IT WAS TRUE THAT FRENCH WERE QUARTERED IN TYRE, BUT THEY DID NOT IN FACT CONTROL AREA. THEY AND OTHER CONTINGENTS WERE CONTROLLING ENTRY OF PALESTINIANS INTO AREAS WHICH HAD BEEN OCCUPIED BY ISRAELIS. QUESTION OF EXTENDING LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY TO SOUTH WAS TIED TO LEBANESE ABILITY TO SEND ARMY UNITS THERE. WE AND OTHERS HAD BEEN EXERTING ALL OUR INFLUENCE TO GET GOVERNMENT TO SEND EVEN A SYMBOLIC FORCE TO THE SOUTH, BUT SARKIS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT OPPOSITION FROM PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS TO THEIR PRESENCE. THIS WAS COMPLICATED PROBLEM, SOLUTION OF WHICH IN FINAL ANALYSIS RESTED ON EFFORTS OF LEBANESE ARMY.

6. FRANGIEH SAID IF WE DID NOT HAVE AN EMBASSY IN BEIRUT HE COULD UNDERSTAND OUR TALKING IN THESE TERMS, BUT SURELY I MUST KNOW LEBANESE HAD NO ARMY AND WERE NOT CAPABLE OF SENDING TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. THEY WOULD NOT HAVE A FORCE  
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CAPABLE OF CONTROLLING THAT AREA FOR AT LEAST 3 YEARS. I SAID ON THE CONTRARY I THOUGHT THEY HAD CAPABILITY OF SENDNG SYMBOLIC FORCE THERE NOW. FRANGIEH RESPONDED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO EFFECTIVE LEBANESE ARMY UNTIL ALL THE COLONELS AND MAJORS AT HEADQUARTERS WERE SACKED. NONE OF THEM WAS ANY GOOD AND THEIR RECORDS WERE DUBIOUS. A MAN WHO HAD GIVEN UP HIS BARRACKS WITHOUT A FIGHT HAD NOT CHANGED. HE WAS STILL A COWARD.

7. I SAID I DID NOT KNOW THE HISTORY OF ALL THE OFFICERS AT YARZE BUT I HAD FORMED RATHER FAVORABLE IMPRESSION OF THEM AND THOUGHT GENERAL KHOURY WAS DOING A GOOD JOB, IN THE CIRCUNSTANCES. FRANGIEH REITERATED THERE WAS NO HOPE UNLESS ALL THE COLONELS AND MAJORS WERE FIRED.

8. I ASKED WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE SYRIANS WERE INTERESTED IN HELPING THE LEBANESE BUILD A NEW ARMY. FRANGIEH SAID THAT IS WHAT THEY SAID TO HIM AND HE BELIEVED THEM. THEY WANTED TO HELP. LEBANESE ATTITUDES UNFORTUNATELY HAD NOT BEEN WHET THEY SHOULD.

9. WE TALKED ABOUT THE FUTURE SYRIAN ROLE HERE AND FRANGIEH SAID FAYYADIYAH AND AIN AR-RUMMANEH INCIDENTY HAD BEEN VERY UNFORTUNATE. SYRIAN RESPONSE TO PROVOCATION HAD BEEN HUMAN

AND UNDERSTANDABLE, BUT IT HAD HAD VERY UNFORTUNATE IMPACT. PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT SENDING SYRIANS HOME. WHAT DID THEY EXPECT WOULD HAPPEN? WHAT IF SYRIANS CLOSED THE BORDER? COULD LEBANON SURVIVE? WHAT IF SYRIANS DECIDED TO HELP PALESTINIANS AS THEY HAD DONE DURING EARLY STAGES OF LEBANESE CRISIS? LEBANESE COULD NOT PREVENT THESE THINGS HAPPENING MILITARILY. THEY OUGHT TO TRY SOME DIPLOMACY INSTEAD OF TALKING ABOUT MILITARY OPTIONS.

10. COMMENT. FRANGIEH IS OBVIOUSLY NOT FULLY IN TUNE WITH THE OTHER MARONITE LEADERS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS ONLY LIMITED INFLUENCE TODAY, HE CONTROLS AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF THE MARONITE HEARTLAND, HE HAS A "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" WITH HAFEZ AL-ASSAD, AND HIS POSITION COULD BE CRITICAL IN DETERMINING  
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WHETHER NEW CABINET WILL PERMIT EXIT FROM PRESENT IMPASSE. HIS PESSIMISM DOES NOT ENCOURAGE ONE TO THINK THAT HIS ROLE WILL BE POSITIVE, BUT MUCH MAY DEPEND ON WHETHER HIS SON TONY GETS A MINISTERIAL POST (I CRINGE AT THE THOUGHT) AND ON THE NATURE OF TONY'S INTERACTIONS WITH THE CHAMOUNS AND GEMAYELS. PARKER

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